

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS HO CHI MINH CITY 000491

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR EAP/BCLTV

1E. O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [VM](#) [KIRF](#) [ETMIN](#) [HUMANR](#) [RELFREE](#)

SUBJECT: INVITATIONS TO "DISCUSS" RELIGION IN DAK LAK PROVINCE

11. (SBU) On May 29, ConGen Poloff and Pol/Econ assistant met with a reliable contact regarding the situation of unregistered religious minority groups in Dak Lak province. The contact gave ConGenoff a collection of written materials -- some official-looking original documents and several photocopied "invitations" from district and commune police offices in Dak Lak. There were also photocopies of "invitations" from a local Fatherland Front Committee. The invitations ask the individuals to meet with officials to discuss GVN policy on religious affairs. According to our contact, however, during these meetings each individual was asked to sign a document saying s/he would disband the unrecognized church council to which they belonged. The documents originate in either Krong No District or Truong Xuan Commune (Dak Song District). Poloff was unable to verify the authenticity of these documents but has no reason to doubt the source's sincerity.

12. (SBU) Post's contact indicated that the invitations were given to individuals he personally knew in Dak Lak province. He received the documents from the pastors to whose congregations these individuals belong -- with the agreement to protect the information and bring it to the USG and other groups concerned about the treatment of unrecognized religious minorities in the Central Highlands.

13. (SBU) The invitations are dated between January 18 and May 2 and were addressed to the following people:

Y'Chroih
Y Chroih Bap Rok
Y Chroih Ma Roc (a.k.a. Y Chroih Ma Roh)
Y Tai "Ma Jay" (a.k.a. Y Tai Ma Jani)
Y Son
H'Pleh (Ami Vol)
Y'Hoan B'Krong
Y Duc K Man

14. (SBU) The invitations originating with the police in Krong No District requested the individuals to meet with officers at the police station to "work". This verb is commonly taken to mean that the invited person will have to discuss certain subjects with the police.

15. (SBU) The invitations originating with the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Fatherland Front Committee of Truong Xuan Commune, Dak Song District, state the purpose of the meeting is "to review Decision No. 26/ND-CP regarding religious affairs, as per step 2 of the plan to disband the Protestant Church Council", or "to discuss the religious situation".

16. (SBU) According to Post's contact, the pastors of these individuals reported that each time the individual arrived at the required time and place, s/he would be lectured by the official on the law relating to the recognition of churches in Vietnam. Then the individual would be asked to sign a paper agreeing to disband the lay church council of the unrecognized Protestant church to which s/he belonged. If the individual did not agree to sign, s/he had to stay in the office until close of business. Post's contact said that sometimes this daily summons and "office detention" would continue for up to two weeks.

17. (SBU) Comment: This is the first time Post has seen what appears to be an official paper request to disband a house church council. As far as we know, the GVN's official recognition of the Southern Evangelical Church of Vietnam (SECV) did not stipulate a limit on the number of churches that could be recognized within each district within a province. In previous discussions with the Ethnic Minority and Religious Affairs Committees of Dak Lak and Gia Lai Provinces, committee members never mentioned a limit on the number of churches, but did say each "sub-association" seeking recognition as a church should have a minimum of about 100 members. However, Post's contact has indicated that when his pastor friends discussed applying for official GVN recognition through the SECV, they were told by district officials there could only be one recognized Protestant church -- of any denomination -- per district. Post's contact said that believers of all sects have been told they must consolidate with the single recognized Protestant church in their district in order to be considered legal. (All house churches and their church councils remain

technically illegal.) ConGenoffs will pursue this issue with provincial officials and reliable contacts. End comment.
YAMAUCHI